



RESPONDING TO TEMPERATURE COMPLAINTS

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Most buildings will experience, at some time, problems related to uncomfortable office temperatures and drafty conditions. Complaints may originate from only one or two employees or large groups of tenants on a floor or in a building. The importance of responding quickly and managing these situations expeditiously is critical to maintaining employee morale and minimizing business disruption.

Temperature Complaints

Evaluation of temperature problems should begin by reviewing the complaints to understand and validate the problems and to determine whether it is a heating, ventilating and air conditioning (HVAC) system issue. The 2001 American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air-Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE) Handbook points out that for typical comfort conditions, five percent of occupants will be dissatisfied.

Ambient indoor office temperatures should generally range between 72 and 75 degrees Fahrenheit. Although regulations exist that define maintenance requirements for HVAC systems, the California Occupational Safety and Health Administration (Cal/OSHA) does not have a regulation that prescribes an acceptable range for indoor temperatures.

Lack of ventilation: Insufficient supply of air conditioned air may generate complaints of stuffiness and make it excessively warm in the office. The lack of adequate ventilation may result from blocked air supply registers, such as closed or inoperative supply dampers, air supply registers sealed by building occupants (see **Draft Complaints**, below) or damaged ductwork. If the cause of the problem is not obvious, it may require the assistance of the building engineer to inspect the HVAC system.

Lack of Air Supply Registers: Office remodeling involving the rearrangement of office spaces and walls does not always include the redesign of the ventilation system. As a result, some areas may not receive adequate ventilation. Corrective measures may include the installation of ventilation grilles in doors/walls to allow air movement into the area, or the installation of new air supply registers (requiring HVAC system balancing after the installation).

Draft Complaints

Air supply registers directly above employees may cause complaints if the air blows down on them. Employees will cover the registers with cardboard or file folders, or close the register dampers, to block the draft.

When responding to draft complaints, methods to deflect or redirect the draft should be pursued rather than blocking or closing the air supply register (which may unbalance the HVAC system and cause temperature complaints in other locations). Products such as ventilation deflectors can redirect the flow of air from overhead air supply registers while maintaining HVAC system balance and ensuring appropriate ventilation for all areas.